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## Jack Kerouac

Hailey Cragun

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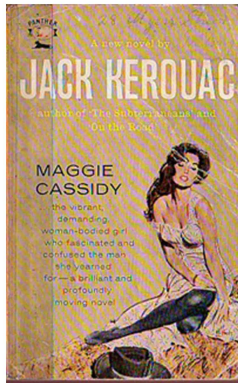
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# JACK KEROUAC



Gerard, Kerouac's older brother and his mother's darling, died at age nine in 1926 after fighting recurring bouts of rheumatic fever. Jack later imagined the devout Gerard as a saint, and wrote a novel about him entitled *Visions of Gerard*. Jack and his sister were left to care for their mother when his father, Leo, passed away in spring 1946. In 1964 he lost his sister, Caroline, to a heart attack when she was told by her estranged husband that he wanted a divorce. These incidents, combined with the fame that overwhelmed the naturally shy Kerouac, would drive him further and further into drinking, sometimes "a quart of whiskey a day" as early as 1999.

Despite his inability to form long lasting relationships with women, Kerouac had many short term relationships. His first was his high school sweetheart, Mary Carney, who inspired his book, *Maggie Cassidy*. On August 22, 1944, Jack married Edie Parker, his first wife, whom he fondly called "the wife of my youth." On November 3, 1950, Jack passionately launched himself into another short term marriage with Joan Haverty. Alene Lee and Esperanza Villanueva would inspire *The Subterraneans* and *Tristessa* respectively. LuAnne Henderson, the sixteen-year-old bride of Neal Cassady, would also later become Kerouac's lover. He would have a torrid affair with that same friend's wife, Carolyn Cassady. In November 1966, Stella Sampas, the sister of his childhood friend Sebastian Sampas, would be Jack's third and final wife.



## Life Sketch

Kerouac emerged as one of the brightest stars in the firmament of American letters due to the success of his 1957 novel, *On the Road*, but this fame would contribute to his undoing. Despite the fact that he had devoted himself to literary success for many years, Kerouac was unprepared for either the hostility leveled at his experimental style or the adulation of fans. He was in some ways famously shy, too self-conscious or insecure even to read his recently completed volume of poetry, *Mexico City Blues*, at the now famous 1955 Six Gallery reading. He assumed a leading role in the Beat movement that sprang largely from the Six Gallery reading and *On the Road*, but he repeatedly distanced himself from the Beats. Kerouac found it increasingly difficult to establish a spiritual foundation for his work and life. The alcoholism that had plagued him from youth led to his early demise in 1969. "Beat" to him, however, had always meant something beautiful. Perhaps he said it best, mere months before his death, "[the Beat movement] was pure in my heart."

## Chronology

1922 - Born in Lowell, Massachusetts.

1944 - Kerouac meets Lucien Carr, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs, the primary figures with whom he would form the Beat movement.

1945 - Kerouac begins writing *The Town and the City* and meets Neal Cassady who sends Kerouac *On the Road*.

1947-1957 - Kerouac travels to Colorado, California, New York, Louisiana, Mexico, North Carolina, Washington, Tangier, Morocco, Paris, and London.

1955 - After writing *Mexico City Blues*, Kerouac attends the Six Gallery reading but refrains from reading.

1957 - Kerouac brings the Beat movement to the forefront of popular culture with the publication of his novel *On the Road*.

1957-1968 - Kerouac publishes *The Subterraneans*, *The Dharma Bums*, *Dr. Sax*, *Mexico City Blues*, *Maggie Cassidy*, *Tristessa*, *Lonesome Traveler* and various other novels.

1960 - Kerouac suffers alcohol withdrawal and a nervous breakdown.

1961 - Kerouac begins to distance himself from the core group of Beats, moving to Florida with his mother to be near his sister, Nin.

1967 - Kerouac dies in Florida of an abdominal hemorrhage suffered on October 21, at the age of forty-seven.



Growing up with his mother, Gabrielle, a devout Catholic, Kerouac's spiritual belief was always grounded in Catholicism. Father "Spike" Morissette, Jack's childhood priest, encouraged Jack's dreams of becoming a writer. However, as time progressed, Jack would come to feel less and less attached to his Catholicism (at least consciously). In early 1954 Jack discovered Buddhism and self-converted. This would heavily influence his writing in *Mexico City Blues* as well as *The Dharma Bums*. In Buddhism he found a connection to being Beat and being enlightened. As time would tell, Kerouac would ultimately return to his childhood faith, announcing himself Catholic repeatedly at the end of his life.

# JACK KEROUAC

**1922-71**  
The date of his death is marked on the wall. A small plaque below it reads: "Kerouac was born on January 12, 1922, in Lowell, Massachusetts." The date is written in a stylized font.

A small rectangular plaque with text, likely providing biographical details or a quote related to Kerouac's life.



...the possibility of being long-haired, ...  
...the possibility of being long-haired, ...  
...the possibility of being long-haired, ...



### Life Sketch

Kerouac emerged as one of the brightest stars in the firmament of American letters due to the success of his 1957 novel, on the road but this from would contribute to his writing, despite the fact that he had devoted himself to literary success for many years. Kerouac was supported for almost two decades by the literary world of the Beat Generation in New York City. It was in New York that Kerouac met the other members of the Beat Generation, who were to become his friends and confidants. Kerouac was a member of the Beat Generation, a group of writers who were to become his friends and confidants. Kerouac was a member of the Beat Generation, a group of writers who were to become his friends and confidants.

### Chronology

- 1922 - Born in Lowell, Massachusetts.
- 1944 - Kerouac meets Lucien Carr, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs, the primary figures with whom he would form the Beat movement.
- 1945 - Kerouac begins writing The Town and the City and meets Paul Kennedy who would become his first editor.
- 1949 - Kerouac travels to Oakland, California, New York, Louisiana, Mexico, South Carolina, Washington, Douglas, Nevada, Texas, and Seattle.
- 1950 - After writing Mexico City Blues, Kerouac attends the 10th All-city reading but refrains from reading.
- 1951 - Kerouac brings the Beat movement to the forefront of popular culture with the publication of his novel, On the Road.
- 1956 - Kerouac publishes the underground newspaper The Harvard Times for the Boston City Blues, Single Sunday, Tristram, Common Sense, and various other novels.
- 1958 - Kerouac suffers alcohol withdrawal and a serious breakdown.
- 1959 - Kerouac begins to distance himself from the core group of Beats, moving to Florida with his mother to be near his sister, Mia.
- 1967 - Kerouac dies in Florida of an aortic aneurysm suffered on October 21, at the age of forty-seven.



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**PROCEDURE**  
The title of the museum is the "Beat" of Kerouac, connecting language to culture. The Beat is a word of Kerouac, meant to be a word of Kerouac, meant to be a word of Kerouac.





